

Governor Markell Highlights Race to the Top Progress

Outlines key priorities to keep education system moving forward

Wilmington, DE – Marking the recent four year anniversary of Delaware placing first in the federal Race to the Top education funding competition, Governor Markell today detailed the impact of the state's efforts to give students the best possible opportunity to succeed in college and career in the 21st century economy.

Additional excerpts from Markell's remarks, as prepared for delivery, are pasted below. Video will be available on the [Governor's YouTube page](#).

"Four years later, because of [our Race to the Top] plan, we're making progress," said Markell, who spoke before the state's P-20 Council, an organization designed to align Delaware's education efforts across all grade levels, from early childhood through higher education. "Delaware's teachers and students are getting support to address our challenges now, and we have built a foundation that allows our schools to continue to improve for the next generation."

Among the trends showing recent improvements in Delaware's schools, Markell noted that:

- The state's dropout rate hit a 30-year low at 2.9 percent.
- More top teachers are staying in Delaware and remaining in schools with a high proportion of high-need students.
- More struggling schools are showing improvement, with about one in five making double-digit gains in the percentage of students reaching their growth targets.

- More students are taking AP courses and passing AP tests.
- And more students are applying to college, including many who would not have considered the possibility of college in the past, despite their qualifications.

Delaware has received more than \$100 million in federal grant funding as a result of the high quality plan the state submitted to U.S. Department of Education detailing ways to address key challenges. The initiatives directly supported by Race to the Top have been complemented by additional state and federal grant funding to increase access to quality early childhood programs and create world language immersion programs, while the Administration has worked with the General Assembly to pass legislation to improve teacher preparation programs.

Markell outlined ways in which teachers and students are receiving more support now than four years ago and described foundation changes to the education system that will make a difference for decades to come.

Highlights of Investments in Teachers

- Better insight into the performance of their students through the development of a world-class data system
- Training for educators and administrators to help them use data most effectively
- Summer institutes programs focused on supporting teachers with Advanced Placement curriculums.
- Support for state's transition to Common Core Standards
- Increased feedback through upgrades teacher evaluation system

Highlights of Investments in Students

- Overhauled statewide assessment to better measure progress toward college and career readiness
- Academic "interventionists" and "deans" used by

Districts to provide targeted counseling to students struggling with academic and life issues that are interfering with their success in school.

- Increased opportunities in STEM education, like in the Brandywine School District, which has renovated lab spaces
- Special programs for freshman to help them adjust to the academic and cultural rigors of high school before integrating with older students.
- Improved access to college through free statewide schoolday SAT and help with application process

Moving forward, Markell said effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards would be the most significant immediate work to improve opportunities for students. He said he also hoped to provide schools more flexibility to use state funding for innovative ideas and reiterated his proposal to make changes to the teacher compensation system to raise starting salaries, while rewarding educators for showing leadership, particularly in high need schools.

“Many have asked what will happen when states no longer can count on an infusion of millions of federal dollars to carry out a grand plan,” said Markell. “But that view misses the point of what this work has been all about. We have created lasting change because now that we’ve strengthened the foundation of our system, we can maintain our progress at a fraction of the cost.

“It is almost impossible to imagine how we would have given our schools the resources and opportunities to meet the increasing challenges of our world without the foundational changes that resulted from the efforts of the past four years – all driven in some way by the plan that won the Race to the Top competition. Without this work, we’d still be a generation behind.”

Council

April 7, 2014

As Prepared for Delivery

Teachers in Delaware's schools today have resources that were not available before to help them make the biggest possible difference in the classroom. We've given them better insight into the performance of their students through the development of our world-class data system, and offered training to our educators and administrators to help them use it productively...

We've invested heavily in our teachers because we know that when they are at the top of their games, students succeed. But we've also supported our kids directly...

From the time they enter our public schools, our students are held to higher expectations. We overhauled our statewide assessment to better measure their progress toward college and career readiness, and we'll take the next step in this upgrade next year, when we align our assessments to the Common Core. To reach their potential, every student can benefit from some extra help somewhere along the way. Academic and attendance "interventionists" in Capital School District, and "academic deans" in Red Clay, have provided targeted counseling to students struggling with academic and life issues that are interfering with their success in school. And we have improved afterschool and summer programs, and expanded childhood opportunities like Indian River Project V.I.L.L.A.G.E. that provides resources for E-L-L students and their families...

Districts like Caesar Rodney has established ninth Grade Success Academies where freshman attend a special "school-within-a-school" so they can adjust to the academic and cultural rigors of high school before integrating with older students. And our students have access to more advanced placement courses to challenge themselves...

Even with all of these efforts, we only fulfill our responsibility to our young people if we ensure they have the resources to transition to their next steps and to be ready for a world in which so many of the jobs they want require more than a high school education...

In partnership with the College Board, we sent packets of information to all college-ready students in Delaware. All low-income students received application fee waivers, and high-achieving low-income students received a letter from all of the Ivy League institutions, MIT and Stanford, inviting them to apply. We followed up on those mailings with extensive outreach efforts – including opportunities for students to write essays and fill out college applications during the school day...

I have no illusions about the hard work that remains, but we should be proud of the progress we have seen so far and we have concrete signs that the policies funded by Race to the Top are working. More of our students are staying on track. This year, the state's dropout rate hit a 30-year low at 2.9 percent. And fewer of our ninth graders are falling behind, which means they are more likely to graduate high school and persist into higher education. More of our top teachers are staying in Delaware and remaining in schools where our students need them the most. More of our struggling schools are showing improvement, with about one in five making double-digit gains in the percentage of students reaching their growth targets. More of our students are taking AP courses and passing AP tests. And more are applying to college. Many students who would not have considered the possibility of college in the past, despite their qualifications, have applied this year.

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